DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 446 284 CE 080 907

AUTHOR Davison, Trevor
TITLE Empathy: A Paradoxical Key to Successful Human Learning Futures.
PUB DATE 2000-04-09
NOTE 18p.; In: TEND 2000: Proceedings of the Technological Education and National Development Conference, "Crossroads of the New Millennium" (2nd, April 8-10, 2000, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates); see CE 080 883.
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; Communication (Thought Transfer); *Cross Cultural Training; Culture Contact; *Educational Trends; *Empathy; *Futures (of Society); Intercultural Communication; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Characteristics; Teacher Qualifications; Technological Advancement

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the concept "empathy" will be fundamental to successful human learning futures. However, while the need for empathetic education workers will increase, the paper also suggests that the possibility of them being so will become increasingly problematic. The paper first provides an outline of some conceptions of empathy and presents a brief argument for why the need for empathetic education workers is both morally obliged and a practical necessary. It then looks to education futures that suggest that education workers and students will increasingly interact with one another regardless of differences in cultures, contexts, time, and space. Within this context of increased diversity among workers and students, the paper addresses how two paradoxes are created: a pragmatic paradox is created, because communication within immediate education futures will involve restricted body language and physical presence and lead to the use and interpretation of words becoming even more crucial, and a moral paradox is created, because the need for empathetic education workers will increase and being an empathetic education worker will become harder, while communications between some groups and about some things will just not be allowed. Finally, the paper suggests why education workers should not give up on continuing to be empathetic. (Contains 13 references.) (YLB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 446 284

TEND 2000

Crossroads of the New Millennium

Empathy: A Paradoxical Key To Successful Human Learning Futures

Prepared and Presented

By

Dr. Trevor Davison

Coordinator, Teaching Learning and Programme Quality

Academic Services

Higher Colleges of Technology

email : trevor.davison@hct.ac.ae

Sunday 9 April, 2000

Workshop 1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

A. Billingsley

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CE080907

Abstract

In this paper I argue that the concept *empathy* will be fundamental to successful human learning futures. However, while the need for empathetic education workers will increase, I will also suggest that the possibility of them being so will become increasingly problematic.

I first outline some conceptions of *empathy* and provide a brief argument for why the need for empathetic education workers is both morally obliged and practically necessary. Drawing on my own experiences as an internationally nomadic education worker, with a significant history of providing both actual and virtual learning activities, I use personal examples to explain the increased need for empathetic education workers. Specific examples are also used to suggest how this will also become increasingly difficult.

Finally, regardless of its problematic possibilities, I will suggest why education workers should not give up on continuing to be empathetic.

Empathy: a Paradoxical Key to Successful Human Learning Futures

The privatisation of tertiary education, the growth in web-based learning technologies and other forms of distance education and the international mobility of a privileged cadre of knowledge workers sets the scene for immediate education futures. Under these conditions it will become more and more necessary for education workers to develop their empathetic skills, if they are sincere about helping students learn.

Knowing is fundamental to being empathetic and successful providers of formal education will be those who work hard at knowing students. However, knowing others is fraught with both philosophical and practical difficulties and dangers.

In this paper I first outline various conceptions of *empathy* before arguing how it will become an increasingly necessary applied concept for many future education workers. Drawing on my own experiences as an education worker, I will provide examples of how being empathetic can contribute towards student success. Finally, I will highlight the paradoxes and associated difficulties involved in trying to be empathetic, and conclude by suggesting why education workers should continue to be empathetic despite these apparent difficulties.

CONCEPTIONS OF *EMPATHY*

Pratte (1992) claims that there are three forms of empathy. One is *empathetic distress*. This is an emotional response to another's distress that is sympathetic. Another is *empathetic anger*; a mixture of sympathetic distress for the other accompanied by a feeling of anger toward any culprit(s). And finally, there is *empathetic injustice*; a feeling beyond sympathetic distress and anger to one where we recognise that others may be benefiting from an unjust situation (ibid).

Others have somewhat different views on empathy. Stein (1970), for instance, argues that *empathy* means a particular way of considering others. When we empathise with others we engage in a *...kind of act of perceiving...[an] experiencing of foreign consciousness in general* (p. 11). Goldstein and Michaels (1985) argue that being empathetic is a case of *feeling together with another*, (p.7) defending their claims, in part, based on *einfuhlung*, the etymological origin of *empathy*, best translated as *feeling oneself into* (ibid. p.4).

While all these views resonate with *empathy* as commonly expressed - 'to put oneself in another's place' or 'to be in someone else's shoes' - there remains in the relevant literature a significant rift between two general positions. A rift hinging on how much one can **be** in someone else's shoes.

One common view is that empathy requires some kind of suspension of one's own personal situation and circumstances and a 'transference' of oneself into the life and experiences of another. Hartman (1984), for instance, argues that empathy requires a kind of 'fusion' between empathiser and empathisee, even if it just a temporary one (p. 233). Buber (1965) is in support by suggesting that:

> *Empathy is to glide with one's own feeling into the dynamic structure of an object (including man), and as it were, to trace it from within, understanding the formation and motorality of the object with the perception of one's own muscles; it means to transpose oneself over there and in there* (p. 97).

Stein, on the other hand, comments that ... *empathy, strictly speaking, is* ***not*** *'a feeling of oneness* (1970, p. 17). For her, empathy does not require 'complete fusion ('oneness')' and neither does it mean denying 'one's own concreteness'. She finds this objectionable because empathy, as a 'feeling of oneness', suggests a loss of what were originally two unique individuals. Empathy in terms of 'oneness' or 'fusion' can lead to a denial of the real and existing circumstances that persons find themselves in when actually relating to each other. And yet, if being empathetic requires a distinct sense of separateness, then there is always the risk that we do not get close enough to be able to recognise what kind of shoes others are wearing, never mind attempting to try them on. If this is the case, then we may fail to empathise and instead, sympathise with them. We may end up feeling **for** rather than feeling **with** the other (Goldstein and Michaels, 1985, p. 7).

This latter distinction that Goldstein and Michaels suggest adds further to the conceptual confusion when compared with Boyea's (1991) analysis. She argues that caring is different from empathy and it is caring that is associated with 'feeling **with** the other', **not** empathy. She claims that it is empathy that is associated with a 'feeling **for** the other' (p. 341). In contrast, Noddings (1984) offers a criterion for caring that is almost identical to the various

conceptions of *empathy* mentioned earlier, those conceptions that require some sense of a denial of one's own 'concreteness':

> *When my caring is directed to living things... I try to apprehend the reality of the other. This is the fundamental aspect of caring from the inside ... displacement of my own reality to the reality of the other* (p. 14) *... it is characterized by a move away from the self* (p. 16) [and] *involves stepping out of ones own personal frame of reference into the other's* (p. 24).

What can be concluded from these various (and confusing) claims then is that empathy is a feeling. It is not clear though whether empathy is a feeling **with** the other or a feeling **for** the other. Goldstein and Michaels claim it is the former, while believing the latter is indicative of sympathy. Boyea, however, believes that it is caring that requires feeling **with** the other, **not** empathy. *Empathy*, for her, is 'a feeling for the other (Goldstein and Michaels' *sympathy*). On the other hand, Noddings believes that it is caring that requires the 'displacement of one's reality' that others argue as being necessary for empathetic relationships.

Fortunately, there is a fundamental and common concern to be found in these various claims. It is a thread that weaves its way through the confusion and vagueness and one that signifies the concern each writer has for individual human beings and the human race in general.

I share this concern and henceforth will use *empathy* to express it. *Empathy* will be used from hereon to signify a sense of basic connectedness and 'we-consciousness' with others, best represented by feeling **with** others rather than feeling **for** others. To feel **with** someone implies a sense of we-ness and togetherness not necessarily reflected in feeling **for** someone. In using *empathy* so I am also stipulating that to feel with someone does indeed require that one 'fuses' with the other, but this is only temporary. Being empathetic necessarily requires a movement of the imagination between two individual selves that allows for both separation **and** 'fusion'. To understand how you see your world I must also understand the ways in which this is framed by how I see mine.

WHY BE EMPATHETIC?

i) The moral argument

Immanuel Kant perhaps best expounds the moral argument for why one should be empathetic. Inherent to his infamous 'categorical imperative', Kant argues all human beings deserve equal consideration of their needs and interests due to their fundamental moral worth as persons. Differences among individuals based on skin colour, gender, physical ability, ethnicity, intelligence, etc are all the outcomes of a genetic lottery and are irrelevant. The needs and interests of the individual bearers of any specific characteristics, traits and attributes should be all considered equally.

Equal consideration is not equal treatment. Equal consideration is necessary for, and prior to, fairness. Fairness is equal treatment of equals and unequal treatment of unequals. The needs and interests of all are considered equally but not all are necessarily acted on equally and hence, there can be variations in individual treatment.

Each society has its own practices and traditions that signify that some needs and interests are more valuable than others and these are evident in law, various ethics, norms and mores. A common example is found in the home. A family of parents and children has different needs at mealtimes but portions of food distributed among them are not always of equal amounts. Fairness demands that while all members' dietary needs are considered equally some get more or less food than others.

Equal consideration often demands that specific individuals, or even social institutions, have to act with vicarious prudence. They have to decide what the needs and interests are of those who cannot or are unable to decide these for themselves. For instance, teachers make classroom decisions for the good of the whole class and the individuals within it despite knowing that some of the students may not agree with the decision itself. A student may have a need to use a mobile phone in class but most teachers would prevent this for the student's own good and the class in general.

Consideration of the needs and interests of others requires **knowing** these needs and interests. Trying to judge what is the best course of action among various needs and interests, even differing or conflicting ones, demands that those involved try their utmost to know the needs and interests of all concerned.

However, just knowing the needs and interests of others is not enough. One must also try to understand the value of these needs and interests to the holders of them. For example, while I know that my son is very interested in playing computer games I struggle with understanding the value he gives to this activity. So while I might be flippant and inattentive when he wants to discuss ways of acquiring more games and playing them, to be fair I must listen to his requests with the kind of valuing that he gives to his interest. Only then would I be giving his needs and interests the consideration they deserve.

Being empathetic then involves both knowing the needs and interests of others and understanding the value these have to the possessor of them. Empathy enacted is a rich consideration of the needs and interests of others. And if equal consideration is morally required, then so too is empathy.

ii) The practical argument

Most good teachers know that a student's learning is made easier when you can make connections between their personal interests and any required curriculum content. Presently, my son completes the academic requirements of his computer courses with ease and mostly fails everything else. There is a familiar argument here that he could be more academically successful if the courses that he is failing were somehow related to his interests.

In primary schools the connections between a student's personal interests and curricula requirements is sometimes evident in 'show-and-tell' activities. Teachers use various objects from each student's private lives to help them learn about curricula related topics. In higher education Doctorates of Education have been designed, in part, to provide an opportunity for students to theorise about some of their specific workplace problems and practices, and to receive academic credit for this. Their workplace needs and interests become the vehicles to achieve academic awards. I had increased success with my engineering students in Papua New Guinea when we examined local rope bridges to help them learn about vectors and forces. Dewey's (1989) philosophy of 'education through occupations' expresses this commonly held teachers' view writ large: Formal curricula requirements should be learned through work. An individual's occupation and/or occupational interests should be the vehicle for their 'general education' and ideally, both their occupational work and general education should serve a community need, which would be another 'interest'.

There are countless other examples to be found in the home, school and work that confirm that personal interest makes a significant difference in achieving given ends. This is especially the case in helping people learn.

When educators identify personal needs and interests among their students, and make connections between these and any curricula requirements, they are being empathetic. They are being empathetic for moral reasons, for learning efficiencies or both and the quality and extent of the empathy will vary dependent on context and the individuals involved.

EMPATHY AND EDUCATION FUTURES: PARADOX AND PROBLEMS

i) Education futures

Much of the near education future is predictable from the now. It provides good evidence that we will at least get 'more of the same'. For instance, many tertiary education institutions - especially universities - have experienced a decline in state support and as a result, have had to become privatised to one degree or another, seeking 'fee-for-service' students ('clients') in a competitive marketplace. Inherent to this competitive privatisation of tertiary education has been various articulations between universities, vocational, technical and community colleges and schools - both state/part-state supported and private. These articulations have usually taken the form of accreditation of programs and courses, and various amounts of academic credit towards further qualifications for individual students.

This increased articulation between tertiary education institutions has resulted in changes in 'traditional' student profiles. School, vocational and technical college students experience university life; university students experience community college life. Education workers within each of these sites increasingly have to work with students different from those that they have been used to. Dialect, accent, dress, personal values and beliefs - including the valuing of the educational institution itself and those who work within it - become more obviously varied. Much of the privatisation of tertiary education has been targeted at attracting 'international students'. Many education workers are having to work with new kinds of people.

Another obvious future trend is the continued growth in web-based learning technologies. While these have made articulation between educational institutions easier, the more resource-rich among them are also increasingly able to provide for potential students anywhere that on-line learning can be plugged in to. As a result, these institutions are also

able to advance their already high profile. Potential students living in remote places with on-line access are more likely to be attracted to the 'big name' institution rather than their local, if personal costs are similar. The growth in web-based learning opportunities allows potential students to choose an institution regardless of differences in time and space.

Education futures will also include the continuing growth of the nomadic knowledge worker, either as a contract employee, consultant or both. The increased use of web-based technologies has opened up new global personal and professional relationships for many knowledge workers, including education workers. For many such workers then, not only are nation-state boundaries eroding, their personal identity blurs, as any sense of home becomes quite literally 'wherever I lay my hat'. Furthermore, 'my community' becomes a concept representing transience (as they move from one contract/consultancy to the next) and virtualness (as electronic groups and personal electronic communications become a dominant form of enduring personal connectivity to others). These education workers belong to multiple, virtual and transient communities where sometimes the most stable among them is the virtual.

All these trends suggest that education futures will create a marked decrease in the apparent ethnic and cultural homogeneity between education workers and students within particular teaching/learning transactions. This creates a paradox for education workers: The more they are 'less alike' from students the more they will need to be empathetic. However, this very increased diversity between education workers and students will at times make any attempt to be empathetic appear almost impossible.

ii) Paradox and practical problems

Contemporary research in distance education (e.g., Ormsby, 1995) demonstrates that students drop out for two main reasons: 1) Insufficient communication with lecturers and other education workers and 2) Insufficient peer support. Both these could be construed as a lack of empathy.

Receiving reams of text in the mail or on-line without any apparent concern from the provider for the unique individuals who receive this information and the rich variety of contexts that they are a part of is an obvious recipe for unsuccessful learning. Authors of distance education materials contribute when they simply 'upload' their class notes for whoever wishes to access them remotely, and administrators contribute in the assumptions

they make about students when responding to their enquiries by telephone or e-mail. Even when students are physically present on campus there is an understandable tendency to treat equally and all alike until something arises that warrants unequal treatment, e.g., extensions on assignments due to ill health. Given the increasing availability of web-based learning and the lack of preparation on the part of many education workers in dealing with a less homogenous body called 'the students', then being empathetic, will become both increasingly necessary and problematic.

As argued earlier, education workers, like all persons, are morally obliged to be empathetic towards others. As education workers per se, and also as argued earlier, there is an educational and practical imperative to be empathetic: Empathetic education workers are more likely to help students learn than non-empathetic education workers.

To achieve this, and analogous to Noddings' idea of teachers getting students to agree to ... *a verbal commitment to the possibility of caring* (1984, p. 18), future education workers will have to become more committed to the possibility of being empathetic. In making this commitment each education worker's desire to be empathetic must *...[n]ot wait, Micawber-like, for a stimulus to turn up so that it may get busy; it actively seeks for occasions to pass into full operation* (Dewey, 1989, p. 48). And even though this does not necessarily require that education workers must **actually** empathise with all students, they have to agree to the **possibility** of this.

A commitment to the possibility of being empathetic requires education workers:

> *...seeing the world comprised of relationships rather than of people standing alone, a world that coheres through human connections rather than through systems of rules...where an awareness of the connections between people gives rise to a recognition of responsibility for one another, a perception of the need for response* (Gilligan, 1982, p. 29)

and also to

> *... interpret from as many vantage points as possible lived experience, the ways there are of being in the world* (Greene, 1988, p. 120).

Both Gilligan's and Greene's aims depend heavily on human communication. How can I develop a relationship with you without both of us learning about each other? How can we learn of each other's 'lived experience' without communicating?

Communication, and the quality of communication, becomes vital for both moral and educational reasons, but education futures will create some difficult communication problems.

The first and major problem for empathetic education workers is how will they communicate with students? It may well be that English is increasingly becoming a global language, but for many users English will remain a second or third language. Yet the providers of most web-based learning and international consultancies are likely to be native users of English.

Given the linguistic differences that will arise between future education workers and students, the least that must happen is that education workers are provided with professional development activities in EFL for learning purposes. At minimum, education workers must know how to create learning activities that 'speak' to a generic, non-native user. Education workers will also have to communicate with students in ways that take into account the cultures and contexts that each student is 'speaking' from and ways and means must be developed that allow and encourage students to 'speak'.

How a student's voice is heard is dependent on the teacher 'granting a hearing' (Jones, p309). Each teacher's presentation of themselves to students sends out overt and covert signals of the kind of 'hearing' that students may receive. The empathetic education worker must reflect on whether how they 'grant a hearing' to students might limit empathetic possibilities.

Even more critical is how education workers 'hear' each student's voice. In educational dialogue the most important voice is not the speaking voice, but the voice heard (Jones, p307). Most empathetic teachers in the HCT have particular difficulties with 'hearing' student's voices. Many students have limited English skills yet the curriculum is required to be taught and learned in English. Because of the language differences between HCT teachers and students, the idea of the 'voice heard' has to be stretched metaphorically to also include the physical presentation of the self and the student's behaviour. HCT teachers have to work hard in being empathetic as their 'hearing' the student becomes heavily dependent on how

they interpret not just each student's limited use of another language (English) but how they dress, how they carry themselves and how they behave and react in specific circumstances. Because of a lack of knowledge and experience, what often happens is that teachers, like any other people, simply and understandably project their own meanings onto students' behaviour and then judge accordingly. For example, many new teachers to the Middle East ascribe regality and royalty to males wearing the traditional dishdash, and act accordingly. Those who have been in the Middle East a bit longer learn that a white, flowing robe does not necessarily imply a royal gown and that it is sometimes even akin to jeans as worn in the West. Conceiving of the dishdash as jeans consequently leads to changes in perceptions of, and behaviour towards, students.

Another practical problem that the suggested paradox creates for future empathetic education workers is that while all persons deserve an empathetic hearing (by virtue of their personhood) not all people, including students, are able. Even if we assume that anyone employed to help another person learn should and is able to act empathetically, we cannot assume the same of some students. Many are not old and/or mature enough. This puts many an education worker in the difficult situation of acting empathetically towards students when getting nothing but grief in return. However, by virtue of the age, experience and professional training of the education worker, they are obliged to continue to act empathetically. Ironically, this will be more frustrating where education worker and students share culture, contexts and language as a common understanding of these is obviously more conducive to empathising. Where these are not so common similar problems are still likely to arise. Here is an example.

I was using the college gym in Abu Dhabi and listening to 'western' music. A student entered the gym and switched the radio off without comment. I asked him why and he made a limited attempt (due to his poor English skills and my non-existent Arabic skills) at informing me of the inappropriateness of such music in a Muslim context. Now this student is just one individual who obviously does not speak for all Muslims. My needs and interests apparently got no consideration, nevermind equal consideration, and his were obviously considered by him to be paramount. On another day I might have made the situation into a 'learning opportunity' for both of us. I could have reminded him that the HCT is a multicultural/multinational enterprise where life is quite often one of continual negotiation between different (sometimes wildly) needs and interests, and sometimes communicated very

badly, if at all. But I didn't. I rapidly considered where 'he was coming from', said nothing and continued exercising without music.

iii) Paradox and moral problems

Perhaps more problematic is the possibility that in the previous example my needs and interests did not receive equal consideration not because of an individual inability but fundamental cultural, even moral, differences that suggest that *empathy* itself is not as universally demanded as I believe Kant's categorical imperative implies.

Much of recent educational theory has promulgated the discourse of difference and the 'other', where once hidden similarities between claimed different people are found, and real difference celebrated. While much of this theory is marshaled to advance a democratic ideal, as central to the '... *development of a multivoiced and equitable culturally diverse society*' (Jones, p299), its shortcomings are also relevant in the furthering of empathy by education workers towards students as argued here.

Some students live and learn in cultural contexts where the relationships between them and education workers hinder or preclude empathy. For some students the teacher is highly esteemed and the provider of all the 'right' answers. Consequentially, the teacher's needs and interests should always be given greater consideration than those of students. In such circumstances teachers can get away with pretty much whatever they want in classrooms - hours of didactic instruction, easy to write and administer tests and most classroom activities decided by the teacher. No fear of 'independent learning' and 'empowerment' here.

Perhaps an even greater moral problem is to be found in those cultural contexts that are antithetical to 'outsiders' learning about 'locals'. Male teachers working in women's colleges within the UAE tread a dangerous path in trying to learn more about their students in order to help them learn. Many female UAE students purposefully present themselves so that men in public see no part of their flesh. A public, educationally intended knowing of students by male teachers can become easily interpreted as desire, replete with colonial hangovers of the mystery of the sexual and dangerous exotic. While empathy is both morally obligatory and educationally beneficial, the very concept may be imbued with assumptions and presuppositions that limit its enactment in specific contexts.

Jones suggests that the historically dominant western assumption that all knowledge is available to the individual who reasonably seeks it just does not apply to some settings, and hence thwarts any attempts at being empathetic. She argues that western knowledge and colonisation are both premised on the ideal of making visible the entire natural and social world. But the accessibility of all knowledge to all people is not a view shared by indigenous peoples, such as Maori, for whom access to certain knowledge must be actively granted. Knowledge comes with particular responsibilities and powers, and therefore is not necessarily made available to those who simply 'want to know' (p311). The future empathetic education worker working on-line or in the 'real' may well be sincere in wanting to know and understand students but much of this may well be off limits. And perhaps here is the fundamental paradox that produces both major moral and practical problems: How will education workers know that the very concept that they are employing to help students learn is not allowed between them?

WHY KEEP ON EMPATHISING? KNOW THYSELF

There is a moral obligation and good practical reasons for education workers to continue being empathetic towards students despite the previously discussed problems. But perhaps a more immediate and tangible reason for continuing to be empathetic is the opportunity it affords to learn about oneself.

Empathy is a relational concept. Being empathetic is not just about trying to put myself in another's shoes. It is also about trying to understand how the world from my shoes frames how I can even hope to see the world from yours. The relational aspect of empathy requires that I know myself as much as I know you.

For education workers this requires that they reflect on some of the assumptions and beliefs they have about others and the relationships they believe they should and/or do have with them. In being empathetic they should try to suspend these assumptions and beliefs and, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, 'put them out of play'...

> *Not because we reject certainties of common sense and a natural attitude to things - they are, on the contrary, the consistent theme of philosophy - but because, being the presupposed basis of any thought, they are taken for granted and go unnoticed, and because in order to*

> *arouse them and bring them into view we have to suspect for a moment our recognition of them* (Merleau-Ponty in Greened 1988, p. 122).

Much of what is 'common sense', 'taken for granted' and 'unnoticed' in the daily, unreflected work of education workers are cultural products, dependent on specific contexts and histories. Education workers' perceptions of specific phenomena are based an assumptions and beliefs that are taken as 'common sense' due to their intimate and regular familiarity. Variations in cultural contexts and histories between education workers and students can give rise to different perceptions of specific phenomena, including those phenomena considered by either of them as 'common-sense'.

Differences in perceptions of apparently 'common-sense' phenomena can get perceived pejoratively. The alternative - recognising that 'common sense' might not always be so 'common' or 'sensible' - involves a level of self-reflection that demands much more intellectual energy than pejorative attributions of others. Take language, for example. It is too easy for some native users of a language to associate non-native use of the same language as expressive of an inferior or under-developed intellect. If I communicate with a student whose native language is dissimilar to mine, and we attempt to communicate in my language, then the student will inevitably try to translate from his native language to mine, and as result, use my language differently to me. But knowing all this makes a difference in how I understand and relate to students. For instance, in teaching Arabic students and using English, knowing that the Arabic language does not include an equivalent to the English *be* completely changes my relationships with them when they say *The engine hot* rather than *The engine is hot*. Before this knowledge I may well have associated *The engine hot* with a child-like use of my language or worse still, evidence of a less-developed or inferior intellect. Self-reflection on my language and a better understanding of the student's language together contributes towards preventing this. I change the ways that I can better help students learn by being empathetic towards them.

CONCLUSION

Much of immediate education futures can be predicted from the present. The increasing privatisation of tertiary education within a globalised distance education marketplace and the use of web-based learning technologies will radically change the mix between education workers and students. The increasing international mobility of the nomadic education worker and their immediate families will add to this mix.

Education workers must communicate with students as best they can to help them learn. Communication is necessary for empathy, and empathy is both morally obliged and practically beneficial, both educationally and generally. Diverse mixes of people with common educational ends makes communication between them even more vital.

Education futures suggest that education workers and students will increasingly interact with one another regardless of differences in cultures, contexts, time and space. This creates a pragmatic paradox: Because communication within immediate education futures will involve restricted body language and physical presence, the use and interpretation of words will become even more crucial. Non face-to-face dialogue and clarification will become increasingly necessary but the very mediums of communication will make this difficult.

The increased diversity among education workers and students within education futures also creates a moral paradox: The need for empathetic education workers will increase, and **being** an empathetic education worker will become harder, but communications between some groups and about some things will be just not allowed.

Despite all these misgivings future education workers should continue to be empathetic for perhaps selfish reasons. Empathy furthers cross-cultural understanding and like Jones, I remain convinced that:

> *... cross-cultural understanding, in that it leads to a deeper understanding of one's **own** culture, and history, and their political relation to those of others, is crucial to any desirable future, and any just structural social change* (p314).

However, my aim for education workers in continuing to be empathetic is less far-reaching: While knowing myself does not necessarily contribute to successful student learning, not knowing myself contributes to my helping students less than I could. And not knowing students as best I can compounds this. If I learn that for some students empathy does not apply or can only be limited in its use, then while this may limit how I can help students learn, I will have learnt something important about myself and the view from my own shoes. Hopefully, this will effect the way I help future students learn.

REFERENCES

- Boyea, A., (1991). "Existential Primaries, Metaphors for Ethics: Dominion and Caring" in *Philosophy of Education Society 1992: Proceedings of the Fourty-Eighth Annual Meeting of the Philosophy of Education Society*, Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois.
- Buber, M., (1965). *Between Man and Man*, Collier Books, New York.
- Dewey, J., (1989). *Freedom and Culture*, Prometheus Books, Buffalo, New York.
- Gilligan, C., (1982). *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts.
- Goldstein, A. P. and Michaels, G. Y. (1985). *Empathy: Development, Training and Consequences*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New Jersey.
- Greene, M., (1988). *The Dialectic of Freedom*, Teachers College Press, New York.
- Hartman, J. J., (1984). *Discussion in Empathy* edited by Lichtenberg, Bornstein and Silver, The Analytic Press, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, London.
- Jones, A., (1999). "The Limits of Cross-Cultural Dialogue: Pedagogy, Desire, and Absolution in the Classroom" in *Educational Theory*, summer, Volume 49, Number 3, pp299 - 316.
- Kant, I., (1981). *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by James W. Ellington, Hackett, Indianapolis.
- Noddings, N., (1984). *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, University of California, Berkeley.
- Ormsby, H. L., (1995). *A Distance Training Programme for Teachers of Mexican Indian Languages*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropologia Social (CIESAS), Mexico.
- Pratte, R., (1992). *Philosophy of Education: Two Traditions*, Charles C. Thomas, Illinois.
- Stein, E., (1970). *On the Problem of Empathy*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague.